

# The Secret to a Healthy Thanksgiving: It's All About Balance!

**DOVER** – Many of us look forward to our annual Thanksgiving feast. Who doesn't like to over indulge in stuffing, mashed potatoes, and a selection of pies? But this annual tradition is the start of the holiday eating season which often leads to weight gain of a pound or more that often does not leave when the holidays do! So what can you do? The Division of Public Health (DPH) is encouraging everyone to make a healthy holiday plan now, that balances calorie intake with exercise.

"Balancing the foods you eat and the beverages you consume with the calories you burn being physically active, is the winning formula to prevent weight gain during the holidays," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "Making healthier food choices and increasing your physical activity reduces the risk for chronic diseases, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers, while improving mental health and wellness." The best way to know if you are achieving balance is to weigh yourself at least once a week." Dr. Rattay recommends that individuals work hard to not gain any weight during the next six weeks, as even 2-3 pounds can be very difficult to lose.

While exercise should already be a part of your routine to live a healthy lifestyle, DPH recommends adding to your fitness routine now, and making a plan to keep up your increased level of activity through the New Year. Take longer or additional walks throughout your day/week, add in a few extra sets with the weights, or spend more time on that exercise bike. It is also a great time to try something new, like signing up for an exercise class you've been wanting to try out. If you don't already have a regular exercise routine,

talk with your primary care provider or a fitness coach about the best way to start one.

The holidays are also time when many of us re-connect with our families. So make fitness as much of a family event as your Thanksgiving meal. Take a walk early in the day and then again after dinner. Other suggestions include playing outdoor games like flag football, soccer, basketball or anything else that gets your heart rate going.

Those of you who plan to travel over the Thanksgiving holiday don't have to sacrifice your workout routine just because you aren't near your gym. Visit DPH's [www.getupanddosomething.org](http://www.getupanddosomething.org) website to learn a great bodyweight workout created by a personal trainer to the stars! The site also has tons of videos, and articles from a several sources on a variety of exercise routines, and healthy eating tips like 'How to Avoid After Dinner Snacking.'

And don't think just incorporating or adding exercise into your lifestyle alone, gives you a free pass to overindulge. Here are some tips for consideration when it comes to your Thanksgiving meal:

- Go easy on your portions. Know what a serving of each item is and stick to it. As tempting as it is, skip going back for a second round.
- Incorporate healthier food choices into the meal. Make sure you have a variety of salads, and high protein foods available to balance out the carb heavy dishes.
- If serving appetizers, serve fruit or vegetable trays, salsa or low-fat dips.
- Cook using non-stick pans and skillets, to reduce or eliminate using oil when cooking.
- Cut back on sugar, salt and fat as you are cooking. Use herbs and spices instead or look for healthier substitutes such as:
  - Use fat-free chicken broth to baste the turkey and make

gravy;

- Use sugar substitutes in place of sugar and/or fruit purees instead of oil in baked goods;
- Try plain yogurt or fat-free sour cream in creamy dips, mashed potatoes, and casseroles.
- Make water your drink of choice. Drinking plenty of water helps stomachs feel full, while drinking caffeinated or alcoholic beverages can dehydrate you.

For more information on healthy eating options, visit DPH's [5-2-1 Almost None campaign webpage](#).

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*